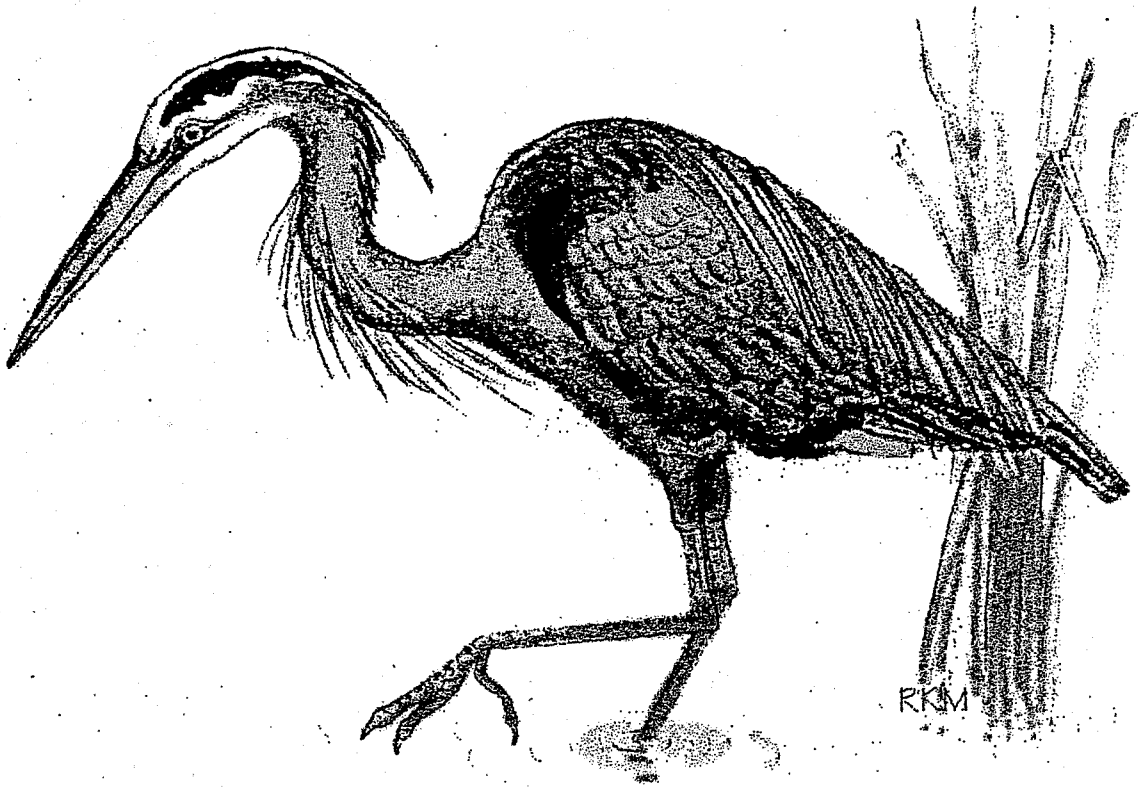


# BIDWELL-SACRAMENTO RIVER STATE PARK



## INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS

May 1997

# BIDWELL-SACRAMENTO RIVER STATE PARK

## INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS

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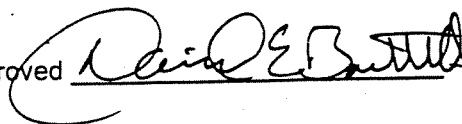
William B. Stewart,  
Supervising Ranger  
Northern Buttes District

and

Richard D. Clark,  
State Park Interpreter II  
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May  
1997

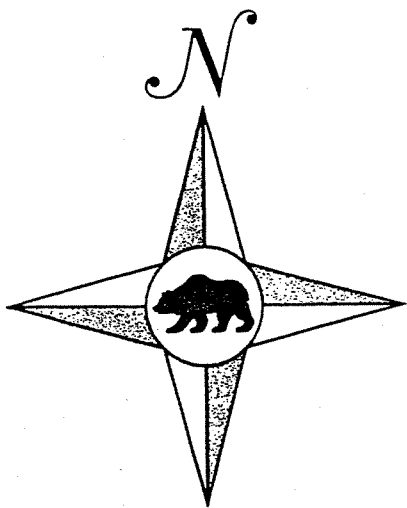
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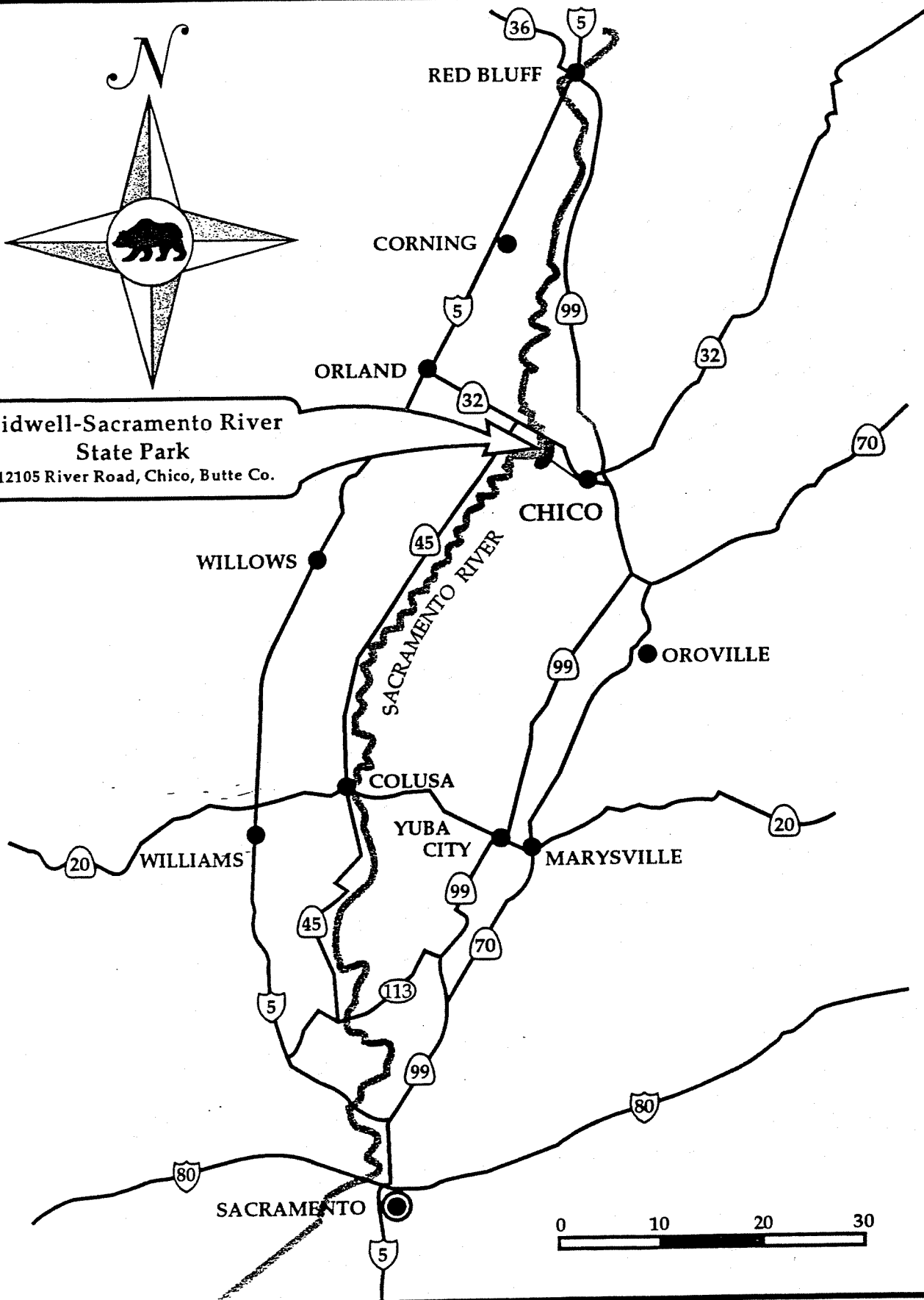
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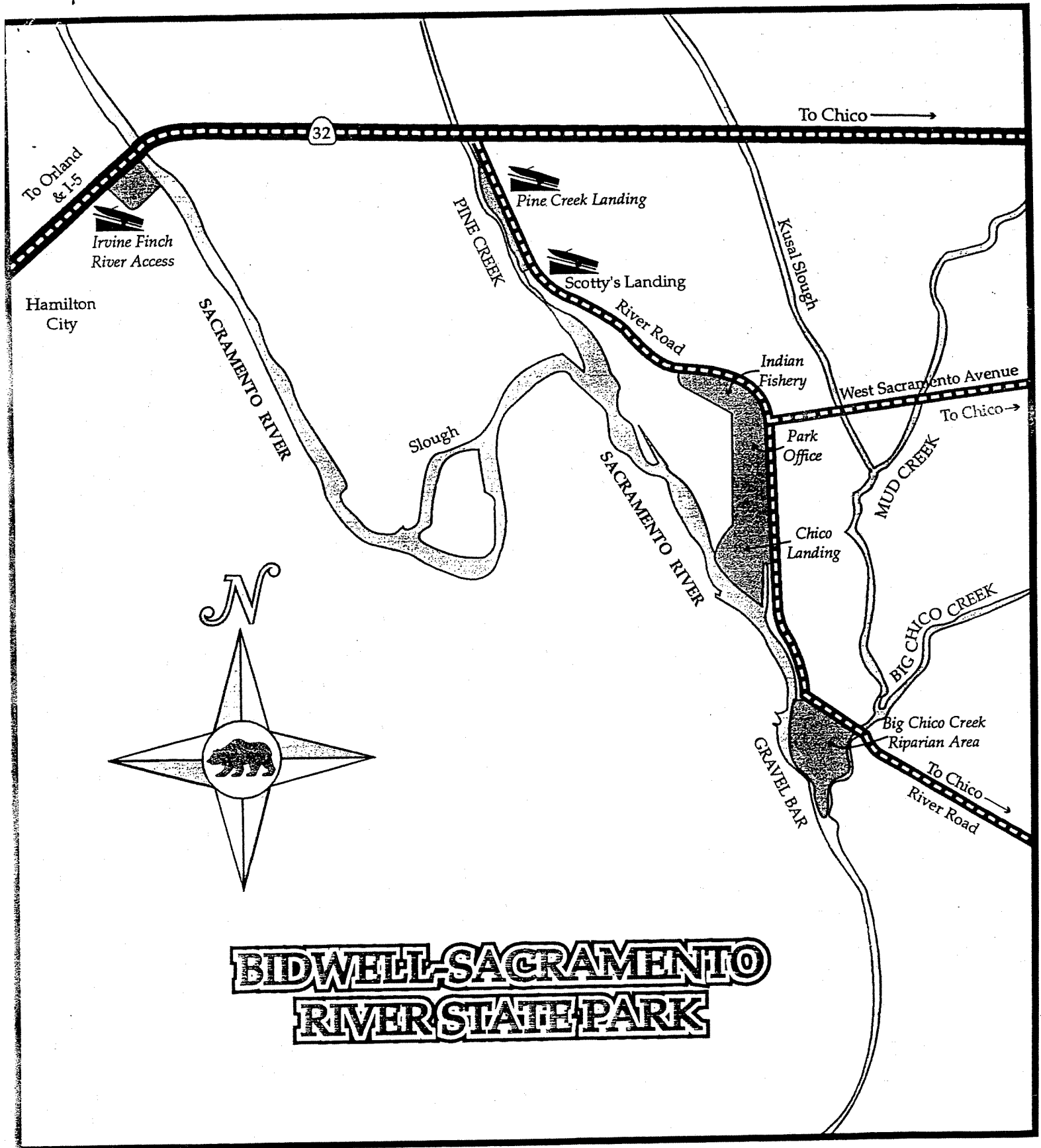
David E. Bartlett, District Superintendent  
Northern Buttes District



Bidwell-Sacramento River  
State Park  
12105 River Road, Chico, Butte Co.



MAP NO.1



# BIDWELL-SACRAMENTO RIVER STATE PARK

## MAP NO. 2

## Introduction

This Interpretive Prospectus provides guidance for immediate interpretive development at Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park. When a General Plan is developed, it is expected that this Interpretive Prospectus will be revisited for possible updating.

This prospectus identifies factors that affect the interpretation of the natural and cultural environment at Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park. It makes recommendations that can positively influence the effectiveness of this interpretation, as well as heightening the public's understanding of natural and cultural history and appreciation of the park.

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretation relies on themes to connect the significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the park to the visitors in personally meaningful ways. Themes define the point of view, and focus information that will be presented through various interpretive media.

## Background Information

### *Location*

Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is located some six miles west of the City of Chico (see Map 1). It lies mostly on the east bank of the Sacramento River in the County of Butte. One segment, Irvine Finch River Access, lies on the west bank of the Sacramento River in Glenn County.

### *Service Areas*

The park may be conveniently divided into five areas of use and location. Though the park is a whole, such a division provides a useful way of describing and discussing the interpretive needs of the park in workable and logical units. From north to south the areas of the park are: Irvine Finch River Access; Pine Creek Landing; Indian Fishery; Chico Landing; and Big Chico Creek Riparian Area (see Map 2).

### *Park History*

On November 15, 1882, John Bidwell conveyed 11.45 acres of land to the County of Butte to build roads to give access to the river. On July 1, 1908 Mrs. Anne E.K. Bidwell deeded to the state a strip of land running west from

Chico along the north bank of Chico Creek for some five miles to the Sacramento River, a strip running on both banks of the Lindo Channel some six miles to the Sacramento River, and a strip running the length of the east bank of the Sacramento River some four miles. This land was to be under the auspices of the State Forestry Service and was to protect tree growth along the wooded banks.

Partly because of the possible overlapping of areas in deeds and conveyances, and the resultant clouding of titles between the state and the county, it was decided in 1950 that the state would convey its portion to the county and thereby merge the deeds. This was authorized by the State Park Commission March 17, 1950.

The state leased additional properties to the County of Butte for recreational purposes. At this time the park consisted of about 181 acres, but not including Irvine Finch River Access, a later acquisition.

The county did not want to develop a parks and recreation program and so leased some land to the Chico Area Recreation and Park District (C.A.R.D.). C.A.R.D. in turn leased nearly all the property to a rod and gun club. By the 1960s boundary disputes with neighboring land owners frustrated efforts at developing a master facilities plan.

A planned cadastral survey of disputed boundaries was not completed. Hunting, shooting, wood-cutting, dumping and the intrusion of off-road vehicles defiled the park. In 1972, at the request of petitioning local government, the California Department of Parks and Recreation was mandated by the legislature to study alternative methods to preserve Bidwell River Park. A resulting 1974 report recommended that Bidwell River Park be acquired by the state as part of the State Park System. A 1977 bill authorized the acquisition of Bidwell River Park and on August 1, 1979, the park was transferred back to the State Park System. It was named and classified as Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park in 1990.

Boundary concerns have been resolved as a result of an extensive State Park Survey and Agreements with Butte County. There has also been an ongoing effort to recover the park by closing off roads, and installing park boundary fences and boundary markers.

#### *Role In Education*

Historically the park has emphasized recreation, but by reclaiming the habitat the department has provided an ideal resource for the study of riparian ecology. Local educators have availed themselves of this resource, from

kindergarten through master's degree programs. One of the goals of this document is to increase interpretation for educational purposes.

## Planning Considerations

Themes need to be developed to organize the interpretation of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park and the region's natural and cultural history and environment. In formulating themes, attention should be given to the following:

- The story of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park has ancient geologic and hydrologic origins.
- The park area's particular origins and its riparian nature have consequences for the kind of habitat it will support.
- The river park's narrative continues with the interaction and use by various cultures: prehistoric cultures; ethnographic and ongoing interaction by the ~~Ken~~<sup>Michoapa</sup> peoples; the incursions of Spanish Colonial and Mexican downstream residents; and then arrival and settlement by trappers and pioneers from parts of Europe, but mainly from an expanding United States.
- The river had an important transportation role with river boats, ferries (Bidwell Ferry), roads, bridges (Giannelli Bridge), a railroad bridge, and wharves.
- Agriculture has been important since the days of the Bidwells and includes orchards, livestock raising and dairying, rice crops and other grains, and sugar beets and other row crops.
- Commercial and subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping were early pre-recreational uses of the river.
- Fishing and hunting were joined by boating, rafting, tubing, bird watching, and water skiing as recreational uses of the river.
- Early recreation uses of the river area included river bank dance halls.

## Focus

Interpretation of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park should provoke an understanding of riparian systems, specifically that of the Sacramento River.

## Approach

- To present Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park in the context of a riparian habitat.
- To be cognizant of the mission of State Parks in preserving the riparian habitat while providing quality natural, cultural and recreational experiences.

- To present the Bidwells' story as an important part of the interpretive history of the park.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The approach for interpretive development in the park will be guided by the themes described below.

*Riparian/Riverine*

### UNIFYING THEME

*The Riparian Habitat is Dynamic and Critically Important to the Health of the Sacramento River and All Life Associated with It.*

The riparian nature of the habitat of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is the dominant feature of the park; the existing habitat is representative of what once dominated the rivers and streams of California. Only about 20% of the riparian habitat remains since Euro-American arrival in California.

### Primary and Secondary Themes

Primary and secondary themes should be developed for each park area. They should define the use and meaning of that area and reflect its contribution to the whole park. The development of the themes for each area will appear in the subsection concerning that area. Such interpretive themes may be primary to an area, but that does not exclude their applicability to other areas of the park.

### Interpretive Periods

The Interpretive Period sets the framework for interpretation in the park, directing and focusing interpretive themes, facilities, and activities to represent appropriate, specific years or groups of years.

### Background Information

#### *Natural History*

Taken as a whole, Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is an example of classic riverine, or riparian landscape. The park contains examples of nearly every successional stage of riparian habitat that can be associated with the river—from barren gravel bars, to pioneering thickets of young cottonwoods, willow, and alder, to towering forests of mature cottonwood, and finally, to the



climax oak woodland community. All habitat types and their associated residents can be observed within the park.

The younger successional stages (willow, alder, etc.) are easily observed anywhere along the river's edge. The successional stages are constantly being produced as the river meanders through the valley, creating and shifting gravel bars about, washing away then depositing tons of silt in which the new seedlings will sprout. This is a process that has been repeating itself for many thousands of years. The older, later successional stages, such as the oak woodland, are less evident, as they take years longer to produce. Most of this type of habitat along the river has been replaced in recent human history with agriculture, owing to the richness of the accumulated soils. However, a good example of oak woodland does exist at Indian Fishery.

The riparian habitat along the river course supports many hundreds of species of plants and animals, some of which are unique to the riparian environment. Providing a rich source of food, shelter, and environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, shade, humidity, water for drinking), the riparian forest is important to all its inhabitants for their survival. It is immeasurably important to California today as an educational example of river dynamics and riparian plant community succession.

### *Native Americans*

Archaeologically, there is a time depth of human occupation in the local area of around 4500- years. The peoples residing in the area during the late prehistoric period up to and through contact with Euro-Americans, are known to us today as the Northwestern Maidu or Konkow. The Konkow, along with the Maidu (Northeastern Maidu) and the Nisenan (Southern Maidu), form a sub-group of the California Penutian linguistic family. Konkow territory covered a portion of the Sacramento Valley from somewhat west of the Sacramento River and ran east into the foothills above Oroville and Chico.

Divided into communities of adjacent villages organized for ceremonial and subsistence activities, the Konkow followed a seasonal subsistence cycle. Wintering in permanent villages, they went into the valley in spring for grass seeds and other plant materials. In summer they hunted game and gathered plants from temporary camps. In autumn they located around streams to catch salmon and traveled to oak groves to gather acorns.

Several Konkow village sites are known in the area immediately around the park boundaries. Six archaeological sites have been identified, but are outside the park boundaries.

## *Euro-Americans*

The Konkow may have first met Europeans and Euro-Americans beginning with the Moraga expedition of 1808. Luis Arguello explored the Feather River in 1821, and the Jedediah Smith party spent several months in Konkow territory in 1828. Between 1825 and 1840, Hudson's Bay Company trappers and American fur traders wandered the Sacramento valley. In 1841 Lieutenant George Emmons and a party of 39 members from the Charles Wilkes scientific expedition passed by on the west bank of the Sacramento River. In 1843 John Bidwell first got sight of the area.

During 1844, three land grants were awarded that encompass much of the present-day park: Rancho Arroyo Chico, five square leagues granted to William Dickey, includes most of the current park; Rancho de Farwell, five square leagues granted to Edward A. Farwell, was to the south; and Rancho Capay, ten square leagues granted to Josefa Soto, was to the west of the river. Much of Rancho Capay later became the property of Richard J. Walsh, a Shasta merchant. To the north, along Pine Creek, the land was unclaimed and became part of US public domain. In 1849 John Bidwell acquired Rancho Arroyo Chico from William Dickey.

## **Planning Considerations**

The primary interpretive period should be in harmony with the park's Unifying Interpretive Theme. Secondary interpretive periods can be used to highlight other eras that help tell the story, and help place the park in the appropriate natural and historic context. In setting the park's interpretive periods, it should be noted that:

- The river and its riparian flanks are the story.
- The story is rooted in geological history.
- People eventually interact with the river and its ecology and have an affect on the environment or play a part in the resource management of the park unit.
- The act of giving land to the state and setting in motion those events that turned it into a state park have historical importance.

## **Primary Interpretive Period: *The Present***

The Primary Interpretive Period is the present, today; what is most important to interpret about the park is how it is now. Though the river and the riparian course are dynamic, what should be interpreted is the immediate.

### **Secondary Interpretive Period: *Prehistoric origins***

Prehistoric origins should interpret the geologic and hydrologic development of the river and its changing riparian environment.

### **Secondary Interpretive Period: *Human prehistory***

Human prehistory includes the interaction of the Native Americans with the river and the riparian basin up to the coming of the Euro-Americans.

### **Secondary Interpretive Period: *Early history and General & Annie Bidwell***

This period includes the early Euro-American period, and focuses on the uses of the river and its surrounding land up to the time of Annie Bidwell's gift to the state.

### **Secondary Interpretive Period: *Annie's Gift up to the present***

This period covers the changes that went on with the small portion of land Annie Bidwell gave to the state, as well as the other portions that have become a part of the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Interpretive information should reflect the needs of the user.
- The sub-entrance sign for each area should be replaced with a newer, more "park-like" structure that both identifies the area and identifies it as a part of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park.
- These sub-entrance signs should also include the park's hours of operation. There should be adequate signing to situate the visitor within the specific area, as well as orienting them to the rest of the park.
- Specific interpretive spots within the site area should be identified. Locations of facilities should be clearly marked.
- Parking and no parking areas need to be clearly marked.
- Programs for presentation on-site or off-site about the area will need to be developed and made available.



# Irvine Finch River Access

## Background Information

Irvine Finch River Access is the only area of the park in Glenn County. It was created when the old steel Giannelli Bridge, a turn bridge, was replaced by a modern high-arch concrete bridge. A portion of land was acquired to be set aside to provide recreation access to the Sacramento River. This was due, in great part, to the efforts of Irvine Finch, a former Glenn County Supervisor. The five acres provide parking for those wanting to use the launching facilities of the park.

## Planning Considerations

Current conditions at Irvine Finch River Access include the following:

- Parking spaces for 295 vehicles.
- A launching ramp.
- Rest rooms.
- Two ramadas for picnickers.
- One notice/interpretive shelter.

Interpretive facilities planned for Irvine Finch River Access should take the following into account:

- The river must be accessible.
- Recreational opportunities must be available.
- Safety is always a primary concern.
- Natural history must not be outweighed by recreation.
- The history of the area also needs to be interpreted.

## Area Interpretive Themes

### Primary Theme

***Access to Recreation: The River Provides the Opportunity to Fish, Hunt, Observe Nature, and Participate in Water Activities.***

Irvine Finch River Access is the primary entry to the recreational opportunities of the park. The launching facilities provide entry for fishing boats, ski boats, jet skis, and the ever popular inner tube and similar rafts. The river provides opportunity for all sorts of water craft sports and activities. It is here that visitors launch on to the river to fish for steelhead, salmon, bass, and

Divide  
into 2  
over view  
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themes  
Sub-  
sections

sturgeon. In fall and winter the visitors launch boats to hunt for pheasant, ducks, geese, and dove.

## **Secondary Themes**

***Safety in Recreation: The River Moves Relentlessly and Water Safety is a Principal Concern.***

***History of the River Banks: As the River Flows Through Time, Cultural Changes Occur to the Surrounding Land.***

The variety of recreational activities, the variety of water craft used, and the variety of water safety skills the visitor brings to his day on the river make water safety an important concern. This concern needs to be communicated to the visitor.

The variety of changes to the land and the variety of human uses of the land need to be interpreted to the visitor.

## **Focus**

The focus of interpretation at Irvine Finch River Access is recreation.

## **Approach**

### ***Interpretive Panels***

- Interpretive panels should be guided by the general and the site specific themes.

### ***Special Events***

- Promote special events by local community groups.

## **PROPOSED INTERPRETATION**

The major emphasis of interpretation at Irvine Finch River Access will focus on the interpretive themes using interpretive panels and special events.

# Pine Creek Landing

## Background Information

The Pine Creek Landing property was part of a parcel of land along the Sacramento River that, along with other streamside parcels throughout the Chico area, was deeded to the state of California by Annie E.K. Bidwell on July 1, 1908.

The park property in State ownership was leased by the Division of Beaches and Parks to Butte County in 1950 by legislative deed, for recreational purposes. Since Butte County did not want to manage these lands for parks and recreation, they leased the property to the Chico Area Recreation District, who sub-leased it to a local rod and gun club.

The property at Pine Creek was sub-sub-leased to private concessionaires who established a boat landing business at the site. The concessions contract was subsequently re-sold to several successive owners through the 1960s and 1970s.

In August of 1979 the park was transferred back into the State Park System and the Pine Creek Landing was once again owned by the State of California. The concessionaire at the time of re-acquisition was occupying the property. He ran a boat launch, landing, mooring business, and a beer bar. He was unable to make necessary improvements to the operation called for by contract with the state, and so relinquished his claim on the property to the state. The property was cleaned up and several run-down structures were removed from the site, including the remains of a dilapidated boathouse which at one time housed a Sea Scout station established at the site in 1944.

## Planning Considerations

Current conditions at Pine Creek Landing include the following:

- The current Pine Creek Landing day use area consists of an approximately 4 or 5 acre site adjacent to Pine Creek.
- There is a small, pre-existing boat launch ramp, and a parking area adequate for about 15 vehicles with boat trailers near the ramp.
- There are four picnic sites, with a short trail connecting them, and fishing access to numerous sites along the bank of Pine Creek. A second parking area will accommodate about six vehicles.
- Family use at this site is increasing.
- There is no potable water source or rest room facility in the area.

- The typical activities are fishing, boating related to fishing, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, relaxing, bird and wildlife watching, and walking.

Interpretive facilities planned for Pine Creek Landing should take the following into account:

- Most of the area's visitors will continue to come for fishing, boating and fishing access.
- There need to be adequate facilities available for the convenience of the park users.
- The presence of the riparian vegetative resources at the site should determine the primary focus of any interpretive panels and/or displays.
- The significant cultural history associated with the area warrants interpretation (e.g., Bidwell's Ferry site; the Sea Scout Station site; or early settlers).
- The area is adjacent to a well-traveled road and will always be subject to the intrusive noise from the presence of automobiles as well as power boats on the water.
- Much of the area adjacent to Pine Creek is subject to annual inundation due to seasonal flooding of both Pine Creek and the Sacramento River. Any facilities installed must be designed with this in mind.

## **Area Interpretive Themes:**

### **Primary Theme**

***Riparian Tributaries: The Riparian Habitat is a Unique Feature of the Sacramento River Tributary System***

### **Secondary Theme**

***Habitat Flows into Habitat: The River Meander Creates a Slough at Pine Creek Landing***

The presence of the riparian vegetative resources at the site, the nature of Pine Creek tributary, the annual inundation, and the resultant slough provide a special opportunity for interpretation of a river meander system.

## **Focus**

The primary focus for interpretation at Pine Creek Landing should be consistent with the overall theme for the park and emphasize the importance of the riparian forest.



A secondary focus should be on the kinds of recreation engaged in by visitors with emphasis on fishing, boating, and observing nature.

## Approach

Since the area is part of the riparian community, it will not be difficult to point out examples of the constituent elements of a riparian area. The riparian zone should be interpreted as a whole, but individual components should also be singled out for a more in-depth explanation.

The various types of fish available and techniques for successful fishing should be interpreted. Tips for safe boating and information about canoeing and kayaking in the area should be made available by panel or brochure. Inclusion as a part of the overall interpretation of the area is essential to properly appreciate the Pine Creek site. There is rich local history associated with the Bidwells and the operation of the area as a Sea Scout station.

## Interpretive Trails

- Canoe interpretive trails: "Up the Creek with a Paddle."
- A fisherman's footpath that connects some of the access and fishing sites should be developed to serve as a "mini-interpretive trail"

## Interpretive Panels

Panels to be used at the Pine Creek Landing area could include the following topics:

- Value of riparian forest vegetation.
- Fish and fishing in Pine Creek. — *from pre history to now*
- History of the Sea Scout station at Pine Creek Landing.
- History of John Bidwell's Ferry. — *Chico Landing, Redwood Ferry & Chico Free Bridge*
- Boating and boating safety.

## Brochures

- Interpretive canoe trail brochure: "Up the Creek with a Paddle."

## PROPOSED INTERPRETATION

Any interpretation proposed for the Pine Creek Landing area will be new, since there is currently no interpretation taking place at the site. Specific sites for the installation of interpretive facilities need to be investigated and marked.

Locations of all signs, markers, and displays will have to be established. Local historical interest groups should be contacted for assistance with the historical site facilities, markers and displays.

A quality interpretive program at Pine Creek Landing will encourage visits by school groups and the local citizenry. Additionally, existing user groups such as fishermen, picnickers and boaters will find their park experience enhanced by quality, on-site interpretation. A canoe interpretive trail will provide a unique interpretive experience for canoeists.

# Indian Fishery

## Background Information

In the late prehistory and early Euro-American periods, as folk memory has it, fish weirs were built and used at this location. This memory has manifested itself in the traditional place name for the area. - ~ date -

Indian Fishery is located west of the intersection of River Road and West Sacramento Avenue. It consists of approximately 35 acres, including an ox-bow lake, riparian vegetation on high terrace, and an oak woodland with an understory of mixed grasses and poison oak. California wild grape and California pipevine can be found in abundance throughout the area.

The area is a day-use park for such activities as hiking, fishing, and picnicking. Indian Fishery has a 1/2 mile hiking trail, called Indian Fishery Nature Trail, that winds through the oak woodland understory along the edge of the ox-bow lake. The trail has sixteen trail markers that direct the visitor's attention to various elements of interest along the way. They include characteristic plants, examples of human impact, changes in the river course, animal inhabitants, and evidences of their activities.

The trail which begins and ends at the parking lot, has been established for day-users. The public use area has been fenced to separate it from the surrounding natural wildland area. There are picnic tables and a portable rest room.

Fishing is popular in the ox-bow lake for bluegill, crappie, largemouth blackbass, and catfish. The lake is relatively shallow and quite warm in the summer.

## Planning Considerations

Interpretive facilities planned for Indian Fishery should take the following into account:

- This is a multi-use area for hiking, fishing and picnicking.
- Interpretation should address the impact of visitors on the natural resources of Indian Fishery.

## **Area Interpretive Themes**

### **Primary Theme**

*Ox-bow Lakes Are Dynamic: The Ox-bow Lake at Indian Fishery is an Offspring of the Ever Changing Sacramento River Hydraulic System*

### **Secondary Themes**

*Oak Woodlands: The Oak Woodland at Indian Fishery is an Integral Part of the Riparian Corridor*

*The Indian Fishery Weir: The Site of the Vanished Historic Weir at Indian Fishery Represents The Native American Uses of the River and its Riparian Habitat*

*Steamboats And Dances: With the Arrival of Euro-Americans on the River the Uses of the River Change and Affect the Riparian Boundaries*

The ox-bow lake at Indian Fishery provides a distinct opportunity to interpret the evolution of the Sacramento River hydraulic system. The oak woodland is an important vegetative response to the changing environment of the area. Late pre-historic and early Euro-American uses of the river reflect the history of Indian Fishery.

## **Focus**

The focus of interpretation at Indian Fishery should be for school or educational purposes.

## **Approach**

### ***Interpretive Trails***

- Trails should be self-guided.
- Consideration should be given to developing a loop trail around the lake in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game and The Wildlife Conservation Board.

### ***Interpretive Panels***

- Interpretive panels should expound the themes of Indian Fishery.
- Panels should be kept within the general public use area.

### ***Special Events***

- Promote special events by local community groups.

### **PROPOSED INTERPRETATION**

A speakers' series would be an appropriate event for Indian Fishery as would guided and self-guided nature walks and school environmental trail experience programs. Interpretive panels and signs are valuable here.



# Chico Landing

## Background Information

The traditional name for this area, Chico Landing, may be something of a misnomer as the mouth of Big Chico Creek was probably the original Chico Landing site. However, the location of the landing was probably moved several times because of changing conditions of gravel bars, the river bluff, snags, and channel depth. No doubt one of the sites was in this area.

Chico Landing was an important connection point with the Shasta stages in the 1850s, and served as an outlet for the cattle ranch of Richard J. Walsh, a Shasta merchant, and for John Bidwell's agricultural products. The upper Sacramento River was the most convenient and fastest method of moving freight into the upper valley until the completion of the Oregon and Pacific Railroad to Red Bluff in 1872. Down-river traffic to Sacramento and San Francisco assumed importance after 1860.

Present day Chico Landing is located south of the Park Office between River Road and the Sacramento River. It consists of approximately 90 acres including high terrace riparian vegetation and an oak woodland with an understory of mixed grasses and poison oak. California wild grape and California pipevine can be found in abundance throughout the area.

## Planning Considerations

Interpretive facilities planned for Chico Landing should take the following into account:

- The riparian environment.
- The historic aspects of Chico Landing.
- The value of a non-intensive, low maintenance environmental camp.
- The value of outdoor education.

## Area Interpretive Themes

### Primary Theme

***The River Is the Laboratory: Chico Landing is an Outdoor Laboratory that Provides a Site for Educational Experiences that Demonstrate and Communicate the Value of Riparian Habitat***

The particular opportunity that an outdoor laboratory would provide expands the scope of interpretation for the area and the park.

## **Focus**

Chico Landing provides a site for education and recreation in a riparian environment.

## **Approach**

Chico Landing provides a site for riparian research, outdoor education, recreational opportunities, and a primitive camp for educational groups.

### ***Interpretive Trails***

- Use existing trails where possible.

### ***Interpretive Panels***

- Interpretive panels should enhance the outdoor laboratory concept.
- Panels should interpret the riparian habitat.

### ***Brochures***

- Develop an Outdoor Laboratory brochure.
- Guidelines for use of the area.

## **PROPOSED INTERPRETATION**

The primary interpretive use of this site will be as an outdoor laboratory for all age groups. The site will include space for a low maintenance, removable, primitive camp. This camp will only be available to educational groups who are using the riparian habitat as their teaching laboratory (See Appendix B).



# Big Chico Creek Riparian Area

## Background Information

Big Chico Creek Riparian Area is on approximately 45 acres between River Road, the Sacramento River, and Big Chico Creek. The site was part of Bidwell's Rancho Chico property. This area consists of a relatively mature riparian forest with inland successional stages present from the bare gravel bar next to the river to the mature cottonwood forest. There are some very old pecan and English walnut trees scattered throughout the area, evidence that this tract was once cleared and planted to orchard. Once abandoned as agricultural land, the area has returned to native riparian forest.

The mouth of the Big Chico Creek was probably the original Chico Landing site, although it is more than likely the location of the landing was moved numerous times. The area is subject to annual flooding of both the Sacramento River and Big Chico Creek. It is thickly vegetated and is important for wildlife habitat. Because public access to the Sacramento River has been established, it is one of the park's most consistently visited areas. Fishermen, sunbathers, and river floaters all take advantage of the adjacent gravel bar.

## Planning Considerations

Interpretive facilities planned for Big Chico Creek Riparian Area should take the following into account:

- Boating, skiing, jet skiing, and tubing.
- Gravel bar recreation in the summer.
- School group visitation for riparian forest areas.
- Expansion of game trails into interpretive trails and fisherman's access.
- Serious seasonal flooding and accessibility problems.
- Gravel bars are nurseries for fish fry.

## Area Interpretive Themes

### Primary Theme

*Changing Face of the River: Confluence of the Big Chico Creek and the Sacramento River Dynamically Redefines the Riparian Landscape*

## Secondary Themes

*The River Requires Stewardship: With Good Stewardship a Healthy Riparian Environment Allows a Healthy Wildlife Environment to Return*

*Recreation and the Gravel Bar: Recreational Use of the Gravel Bar Interrupts the Natural Cycle as the Gravel Bar Provides Environment for Fish Fry, Fry Feeders, and Pioneer Forests*

*Safety in Recreation: The River Moves Relentlessly and Water Safety is a Principal Concern.*

The variety of recreational activities, the water craft used, and the water safety skills the visitor brings to his day on the river make water safety an important concern which needs to be communicated to the visitor.

## Focus

Interpreting riparian habitat and recreation in a riparian environment will be areas of focus.

## Approach

Much of the interpretation to the general public at Big Chico Creek Riparian Area would be dependent on redefined trails, portable interpretive signs, brochures, and public contact with trained staff.

### *Interpretive Trails*

- Nature walks will interpret the natural and wildland areas using existing trails.

### *Interpretive Panels*

- Develop removable interpretive panels based on the themes for the area

## PROPOSED INTERPRETATION

Interpretation at Big Chico Creek Riparian Area will consist of interpretive nature walks, interpretive panels that interpret the themes of the area, and special events as requested.

## **APPENDICES**

### **A. Partial Outside Resource List**

California Department of Fish and Game

The Wildlife Conservation Board

The Nature Conservancy

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

California State University, Chico

Butte County

Sacramento River Preservation Trust

### **B. Proposal For Special Primitive Group Camp And Outdoor Education Concept**

An outdoor education area with sites for overnight camping is proposed for an area within the defined Chico Landing area. There is currently a location referred to by park employees as the "burn-pile", which is what the site was used for in the past. This area is accessible through a locked gate, a controlled entry-point, and has enough open space for a small parking lot, room for portable toilets, and so forth. A footpath leads to a nearby clearing adjacent to a small pond, which is a remnant of the old river channel. This area provides access to many unique examples of riparian habitat and river dynamics and therefore lends itself well to the establishment of an outdoor laboratory or classroom site. There is currently no location like this set up for educational activities in the Sacramento River vicinity near Chico.

There is growing interest in the Sacramento River riparian habitat by university students from California State University, Chico, and by students from schools in the Chico area. Additionally, there are no camping facilities within twenty miles of Chico. There are many requests from organized groups for overnight environmental living studies programs.

It is proposed that this area be developed to include environmental trails, an outdoor environmental classroom or instruction sites, overnight campsites, and parking and sanitary facilities. All facilities would be "primitive" and reversible. This facility would be available on a reservation basis only.

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